

HAVING A BABY DURING COVID-19

Congratulations on welcoming a new baby!

Having a baby can be an exciting, intense or stressful time in people's lives.

Hospitals and birth centres in Ontario have put extra policies in place to help keep you and your baby safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is best to go to your planned birth-place where care providers and your health records are available.

Here is some information to help you know what to expect about feeding your baby in the weeks after birth. Your health care team is there to support you with your feeding decision.

From what we know, babies are not born with COVID-19, but they can be infected anytime afterwards by being close to someone who has the virus. Remember: some people don't even know they have the virus, so take every usual precaution to protect the baby.

If you have, or may have COVID-19, here are some tips to keep your baby safe:

Wash your hands and always wear a mask when feeding your baby.

Sneeze or cough into a tissue and put it in the garbage right away. Then, wash your hands with soap and water.

Place your baby two metres away from you or anyone else who is sick unless you are feeding or caring for your baby.

If you are too sick to care for your baby, ask a healthy adult to help. They should wash their hands and wear a mask each time they are near the baby.

To date, the virus has not caused infection in babies from breast milk. Your breast milk is safe and helps protect your baby from infections and illnesses.

Some extra tips:

If you use a pillow, put a clean towel on the pillow each time you feed your baby.

Do not share breast pumps or infant feeding equipment with other families.

Sharing human milk with friends, family or milk-sharing groups is not safe during COVID-19.

If there is a person who is well living in your home, have that person care for the baby, change the diapers, hold, and feed the baby if you are sick. This may reduce your baby's exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

Once home, call your local public health unit for help or to answer questions you may have about feeding your baby.

HAVING A BABY DURING COVID-19

Breastfeeding:

If you decide to breastfeed, wash your hands before and after breastfeeding. Wear a face mask while breastfeeding.

Sneeze or cough into a tissue and put it in the garbage right away. Then, wash your hands with soap and water. If you have sneezed or coughed over your exposed breast or chest before breastfeeding, gently wash the area with soap and warm water.

When you are not feeding your baby, keep your baby at least two metres away from you. If possible, ask a healthy adult to care for your baby. That person should also wear a mask and wash their hands before they touch the baby.

Expressing or pumping breast milk:

As an alternative to feeding your baby at the breast, you can hand express or pump your breast milk. You can find information on how to do that here: "Expressing and Storing Breast Milk." (<https://resources.beststart.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/B35-E.pdf>) .

Wash your hands before and after you hand express or pump your breast milk. Wear a face mask while you do it.

After you use a breast pump, wash all the pump parts with soap and warm water and rinse them in hot water. If you cannot clean an item with soap, place it in boiling water for two minutes. Wash and sterilize all your feeding equipment after feeding. Keep it clean and covered with a clean towel or lid when you are not using it. That includes cups, spoons, bottles, nipples, rings, caps, discs, and tongs.

If possible, expressed breast milk should be fed to the baby by a healthy adult who does not have COVID-19.

Feeding Formula:

If you feed your baby formula, it is important to prepare it safely. Wear a mask and clean and disinfect the surfaces that you touch often. You can find a video and tip sheets on how to prepare infant formula here: <https://resources.beststart.org/?s=formula>

If possible, formula should be fed to the baby by a healthy adult who does not have COVID-19.